

me that Florida would pass such hideous laws. I think it's very important that the Justice Department weigh in and that the people in Florida are not disenfranchised.

THE NATIONAL DEBT AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LANCE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANCE. Mr. Speaker, as our Nation's debt now approaches its current \$14.29 trillion limit, many Americans rightfully ask: How did this happen?

In the past decade alone, Congress has authorized an increase in the debt 10 times. When Republicans had controlled the White House and Congress, it was Republicans who voted for it. When Democrats have controlled the White House and Congress, it has been Democrats who have voted for it.

The Federal Government has only managed to balance its budget five times in the last 50 years, most recently with President Clinton, a Democrat, and Republican control in the House of Representatives. Washington now borrows approximately 40 percent of every dollar it spends. Foreign investors hold half of our Nation's \$14 trillion debt—not only from China, but from Great Britain, Saudi Arabia, and other places as well. Admiral Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has called the national debt “the single biggest threat to our national security.”

For the first time in modern history, last year's Congress passed no budget, no fundamental blueprint for spending, and no final decision on spending levels through the appropriations process for the entire fiscal year. We've been operating under a series of continuing resolutions, which has led to uncertainty as to Federal levels of spending and as to tax rates, which in turn has led to a lack of hiring in the private sector, with an unemployment rate of 9.2 percent, which in turn has led to less revenues in Federal coffers—a vicious cycle that cannot continue.

Any agreement to President Obama's request to increase our borrowing limit should include a real plan to bring our fiscal house in order and reduce the Nation's unsustainably high levels of Federal spending, debt and deficits. This should include substantial reductions in current spending—at least \$100 billion in fiscal year 2012—limiting Federal expenditures to a certain percentage of gross domestic product.

The historic norm has been 20 percent over the last generation. Tragically, we're now at 24 percent—and safeguards that will restrict future spending, such as a balanced budget amendment, which is contained in 49 of our 50 States.

Also, we must put partisanship aside and include reforms to save Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. If we do nothing, for example, regarding Medicare—and the President's budget

in the winter did nothing—the program will begin to go bankrupt in 2024, 13 years from now. That is simply unsustainable and unacceptable.

When I was a boy and a young man, the fundamental issue confronting the Nation was the threat of the Soviet Union and international communism, the focus of evil in the modern world, as President Reagan said.

□ 1010

The fundamental issue confronting the Nation in the 21st century is fiscal responsibility. Will our children live in a diminished America? Will the promise of America that each generation will do better than the generation before it continue to exist? Will we continue to lead the world or will leadership pass to China or India or to some other place?

This is the great issue confronting the people of the United States, and it is the great issue confronting us here in Congress as well. Let's get our fiscal house in order.

THE REAGAN MYTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, an American President once wrote a letter to the Senate majority leader, urging him to raise the debt ceiling.

The President wrote: “The full consequences of a default or even the serious prospect of default by the United States are impossible to predict and awesome to contemplate.

“Denigration of the full faith and credit of the United States would have substantial effects on the domestic financial markets and on the value of the dollar in exchange markets.”

That President's name was Ronald Reagan, and the year was 1983.

He closes his letter to Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker, saying: “The risks, the costs, the disruptions, and the incalculable damage lead me to but one conclusion: The Senate must pass this legislation before the Congress adjourns.”

Watching the House floor 28 years later, you could be forgiven for being surprised Reagan would ever say such a thing. That's because the Reagan who gets referenced on the floor here is a myth while the Reagan who wrote to Howard Baker urging pragmatism was a man.

The real Ronald Reagan once said: “All of us have grown up accepting, with little question, certain images as accurate portraits of public figures—some living, some dead. Seldom, if ever, do we ask if the images are true to the original.”

In the year of his 100th birthday, the Great Communicator might be amazed at how far his own image has shifted from the original.

He'd see his most dedicated followers using his name as justification for saying “no” to honoring our debts. He'd

see his legacy used to play chicken with the world's greatest economic engine; but as Reagan often quoted John Adams, “facts are stubborn things.”

The facts are these: President Reagan raised the debt ceiling 18 times. He recognized the danger of economic brinkmanship. President Reagan took responsibility when the deep tax cuts of 1981 didn't produce the promised revenue. He worked with both sides of the aisle to find a more sustainable balance. He worked with Tip O'Neill to shore up Social Security. He worked with my predecessor Dan Rostenkowski to reform the Tax Code and eliminate tax loopholes.

All of these actions would be condemned as tax increases by the purists who follow the image instead of the man. Image worship is a bipartisan disease, but we all do ourselves and our Nation a disservice by distorting past images to justify present policies.

As another American President, John F. Kennedy, once put it: “The greatest enemy of the truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived and dishonest—but the myth—persistent, persuasive and unrealistic.”

To say I disagreed with President Reagan on a number of issues is an understatement, but the more I get to know the myth, the more I like the man. President Reagan was not a picture on the wall. He was President of the United States for two terms in office, and he did his best to fulfill his sworn obligations.

We in Congress would do well to follow his lead and focus on what we can do during our short time in office. Let's truly follow President Reagan's example and govern for the future, not a past that never existed. Instead of talking to portraits, let's talk to each other.

AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I am once again on the floor of the House with a picture of children who have lost a loved one in Afghanistan. Eden and Stephanie Balduf, shown here at Arlington Cemetery, lost their father, Sergeant Kevin Balduf, on May 12 of this year.

Sergeant Balduf, who was stationed at Camp Lejeune Marine Base, and Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Palmer, stationed at Cherry Point Marine Base, were sent with the mission to train Afghan citizens to become police. The men had just sat down to dinner when a rogue trainee opened fire, killing both men.

In an e-mail to his wife the day before he died, Sergeant Balduf said: “I don't trust them. I don't trust them for anything, not for anything at all.”

This brings me to a quote from AC Snow's recent column in the Raleigh News and Observer, titled, “Time to

Bring Them Home. Let Them Live.” Mr. Snow is a well-known and respected correspondent in North Carolina.

“It seems we never run out of wars. It is as if one small country after another sends out engraved invitations reading: ‘We’re having a war. Please come.’”

“And Uncle Sam goes, lugging borrowed billions and thousands of young men and women to sacrifice on the altar of so-called ‘freedom’ or ‘nation-building.’”

Mr. Speaker, I go back to the two little girls in this picture. How many more children will be at the graveside of a loved one? How many more will have to know the pain of war?

I further quote from AC Snow’s article, which is quoted from the play *Les Misérables*: “He is young. He is only a boy. You can take. You can give. Let him be. Let him live. Bring him home. Bring him home. It’s way past time to stop playing politics with the lives of America’s youth. Bring them home. Let them live, not just 30,000 of them—all of them.”

I agree with Mr. Snow and many others across this Nation who are calling for our troops to come home. Bin Laden is dead, and there are fewer than 30 al Qaeda remaining in Afghanistan, according to intelligence reports. We have done our job. We have won. It is time to bring them home.

The reason I continue to come down here on the floor is because of a statement former Secretary of Defense Bob Gates made before the Armed Services Committee in February, and I sit on that committee:

“That is why we believe that, beginning in fiscal year 2015, the United States can, with minimal risk, begin reducing Army active duty end strength by 27,000 and the Marine Corps by somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000. These projections assume that the number of troops in Afghanistan would be significantly reduced by the end of 2014, in accordance with the President’s strategy.”

I share this because I believe we are still in a black hole even with the President withdrawing 10,000 troops this year. Let’s not wait until 2014 or 2015. Let’s not bring any more pain to our military families. Our job is done. Let’s bring them home.

Mr. Speaker, before closing, one more time, on the faces of these little girls is the face of pain, of a daddy they will never grow up to know. It is time to bring them home, Mr. Speaker. It is time to bring them home.

On behalf of Eden and Stephanie and all the children across this country who have lost loved ones, may God bless you and your families. May God bless our men and women in uniform, and may God continue to bless America.

JOBS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, as we go home to our districts, I am certain that no constituents have said they wake up in the morning wondering about what we’re going to do with the debt ceiling. In my district, most wonder how they’re going to get a job, how they’re going to take care of their families.

So many Americans have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. They didn’t commit any wrongdoing. They lost their savings. Many are homeless. They’ve lost their self-esteem. They’ve lost their health benefits, and they’re looking toward this Congress to kind of put America on the right track—to restore the middle class that made us such a great and successful Nation.

Instead of talking about jobs, we find ourselves holding the President hostage by saying, unlike other Presidents, we’re not going to increase the debt ceiling. This is a technical way of saying that we owe \$14.3 trillion to people whom we borrowed from for unnecessary wars, for tax cuts that shouldn’t have been there, and for a variety of things that unemployed people throughout the United States are just not responsible for. Instead of talking about jobs, they will tell you we have to cut spending.

□ 1020

So the people who have lost their jobs may lose their Medicaid, those who are poor enough to be eligible for it; the older people that soon will be or are entitled to Medicare and the hospitals and the doctors and the nurses; and, of course, Social Security that so many millions of Americans have come to depend on. Cutting these benefits are not just cutting benefits for the vulnerable, but we’re cutting jobs. You can’t cut benefits without cutting hospital workers, without cutting off nurses and doctors and those that provide the services for the vulnerable.

Is this the only way we can go? Of course not.

Pastors and rabbis and imams all over the country ask: Why are you picking just on the vulnerable? Why are you picking on the sick and the poor and the aged?

Is there another way that we can resolve this problem? You bet your life there is. Because, just as in biblical days, we have among us those who really God has blessed with riches that our parents and grandparents never thought could be accumulated. Are we asking them to pay just a little bit to ease the pain for those that are vulnerable?

I don’t know about you, but our pastors and rabbis have spoken out. And for those of you who don’t have pastors and don’t have rabbis or don’t have time to listen to our obligation morally, to the people that can’t speak for themselves, the people who have no lobbyists, I will place into the RECORD what 4,000 pastors have said is not just our legal and political obligation but,

more importantly, our moral obligation. I will place this into the RECORD for when we come back and try to decide what is our responsibility.

Some people have come to this Congress with a commitment not to raise taxes no matter what, whether we’re attacked, whether the revenue’s coming from obscene tax offenses, whether the Tax Code could be improved.

For those of you who remember kamikaze pilots, these were people who were prepared to lose their own lives in fighting our forces during World War II even if it meant that they were destroying somebody.

There are people here that are prepared to destroy the fiscal reputation of the United States of America so that they can go back home and say they fulfilled their commitment about not raising revenues and about slashing and cutting those people that made this great country the great country that it is.

So I see on television no one talking about the poor. But thank God we do have ministers, priests, rabbis, imams, and of all of the religions and people that have come together, most of whom from foreign lands, that say this land is my land and in this country a poor person can make it, and we never, never, never will forget where we’ve come from.

Some people have managed to get out of poverty. Others have enjoyed the middle class. Let’s hope that our kids and grandkids will be able to enjoy the benefits of doing the right thing.

[From Faith in Public Life and Sojourners, July 19, 2011]

AN OPEN LETTER TO CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT—LISTEN TO YOUR PASTORS

More than 4,000 of them believe the federal budget is not just a fiscal document, but a moral one.

We are local pastors. We work, pray, and do whatever we can to remain faithful to the responsibility of every Christian to help the poor. Still, we can’t meet the crushing needs by ourselves.

Programs like SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, and Head Start aren’t just abstract concepts to us; they serve the same people we serve. There are changes that can be made or efficiencies that can be found, but every day we see what government can do.

We have seen government support allow young people to be the first members of their families to get college degrees, ensure mothers can feed their children a healthy diet, enable those with disabilities to live fulfilling lives, give much needed medical care to those who can’t afford it, support seniors, provide housing for families, and help people in finding a job.

As Christians, we believe the moral measure of the debate is how the most poor and vulnerable people fare. We look at every budget proposal from the bottom up—how it treats those Jesus called the “least of these” (Matthew 25:45). They do not have powerful lobbies, but they have the most compelling claim on our consciences and common resources.

As Christian leaders, we are committed to fiscal responsibility and shared sacrifice. We want to support you in reducing the deficit. There is more need today than churches can meet by themselves. This is why we join in the “Circle of Protection” around programs